

881 after the birth of the first child ; they are also required to abstain
262 from honey during each subsequent pregnancy ; and in their case,
too, a chief or elder (preferably a relative) officiates, and not a
woman¹."

753 We may now proceed to the ritual customs connected with
761 death and burial. In all the Great Andaman tribes disease and
death are supposed to be due to the spirits of the jungle and the
sea. The subject will be dealt with in the next chapter.

764 On the occurrence of a death the news quickly spreads
through the camp, and all the women collect round the body
and, sitting down, weep loudly until they are exhausted. The
women then retire and the men come and weep over the corpse.
All the adult members of the community then proceed to cover
themselves with a wash of common clay smeared evenly over
their bodies and limbs. This clay is of the kind called *odu* in
Aka-Jeru and *og* in *Aka-Bea*. The nearer relatives and more
intimate friends of the deceased also plaster some of the same
clay on their heads.

Some of the women, generally, but not necessarily, relatives,
remove any ornaments the dead person may have been wearing,
shave the head and decorate the body. This decoration consists
of lines of fine pattern in white clay alternating with bands of
red paint. A band of red paint is placed across the upper lip
passing from ear to ear and the ears themselves are smeared
with the pigment. The greater the estimation in which the
deceased person is held the greater is the care lavished upon
this the last decoration.

Thus decorated the body is prepared for burial. The legs
and arms are flexed so that the knees come up under the chin
and the fists rest against the cheeks. A *Cyrena* shell (or some-
times in these days a steel knife) is placed in the closed hand.
A sleeping mat is wrapped round the body, and over this a
number of the large palm leaves known as *kobo* (*Aka-Jeru*) are
arranged and the whole is made into a bundle and tied up with
rope. Before the ropes are all tied the relatives of the dead
person take their last farewell by gently blowing on the face of
the corpse.

¹ Man, *op. cit.* p. 133.

III]

RELIGIOUS AND MAGICAL BELIEFS

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show any fear, my informants said, the spirits would kill him, but if he were brave they would take him to their village, detaining him for a time, and then releasing him to return to his friends. A man to whom such an adventure has happened will be endowed for the rest of his life with power to perform magic. He will pay occasional visits to his friends the spirits. The natives told me of one such man who died not many years ago. At irregular intervals he used to wander off into the jungle by himself and remain absent for a few hours, sometimes for a day or two. He returned to the village after such an absence looking strange and wearing ornaments of shredded palm-leaf (*koro*) which he claimed had been placed upon him by the spirits. 791 775

Save for persons who have made friends with them, and have thereby become endowed with magical powers, all contact with the spirits of the jungle and the sea, or with the spirit of a dead man, is dangerous. The spirits are believed to be the cause of all sickness and of all deaths resulting from sickness. As a man wanders in the jungle or by the sea, the spirits come invisibly and strike him, whereupon he falls ill, and may die. A man or woman is more likely to be attacked by the spirits if he or she is alone, and it is therefore always better to be in company when away from the village. The spirits rarely venture into the village itself, though they may prowl round it, particularly at night. They are more dangerous at night than during the day. 753 775

There are many objects that are believed to have the power of keeping spirits at a distance, and thus of preserving human beings from the danger of sickness. Amongst the most important of these are fire, arrows, human bones, bees'-wax, and red paint. A man or a woman leaving a hut to go only a few yards at night will always carry a fire-brand as a protection against spirits that may be prowling in the neighbourhood. If the night be dark a torch is carried in addition to the fire-stick. 751 775

The Andamanese will never whistle at night, as they believe that the noise of whistling would attract spirits. On the other hand they believe that singing will keep the spirits away. [784]

The spirits that haunt the woods and waters of a man's own home are regarded as being less dangerous to him than those of 775

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White clay (*tol-odu* in *Aka-jeru*) is sometimes used medicinally, both externally and internally. The commoner clay (*odu* in *Aka-jeru*) is plastered on sores, and has the effect of keeping off flies, if it does nothing else.

An olive-coloured earth (called *čulga* in *Aka-Bea*), found in certain springs, is prized as a remedy. It is mixed with water and taken internally as a general remedy for all sorts of complaints.

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Turning now to the magical properties of vegetable substances, there are a large number of these, and some of them have not been botanically identified.

• [753]

The *Anadendron paniculatum* is a plant from which the Andamanese obtain a valuable fibre, which they use for their bow-strings, and for thread with which to make their arrows and harpoons. A number of magical properties are attributed to this plant. Rheumatism is supposed to be due to the "smell" of the plant getting into the system when the fibre is being prepared¹. The "smell" of the green plant, or of the fibre until it has been thoroughly dried for some days, is believed to frighten away turtle. A man who has been preparing the fibre would not dream of joining a turtle-hunting expedition, for his presence in the canoe would be sufficient to drive away all the turtle. A turtle-hunting expedition would be a failure if a piece of the green creeper were in the canoe. A man who has been handling the plant may not cook turtle, for the meat would be "bad," i.e., uneatable. The same thing would happen if turtle meat accidentally came in contact with a piece of the plant. All this applies only to the green creeper, and not to the fibre after it has been properly prepared and dried. The fibre itself is used for binding the heads of turtle-harpoons, so it is evidently regarded as harmless.

If a piece of the *Anadendron* creeper were burnt in the fire the natives believe that it would drive all the turtle away from the neighbourhood, or, according to another statement, that there would be a great storm.

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So far we have considered the properties of the plant only in

¹ In preparing the fibre, the skin or bark of the young shoots of the plant is torn off in strips and these are placed on the thigh and scraped with a *Cyrena* shell.

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It is probable, then, that when a native says that after eating food he is *ot-Limil* and therefore paints himself with clay he does not mean simply that he is hot. This will be still more evident when we consider the second explanation of the custom that is given by the natives. Many of those whom I questioned stated that after eating dugong, pork, turtle, etc., the body emits an odour, that this odour may attract the spirits of the jungle or the sea, and that to obviate this they paint themselves with clay. This agrees exactly with what Mr Man says in the second passage quoted above. It is confirmed by other customs. I was told that a man who has eaten dugong will not leave the camp until some time after the dugong meat is all finished, for fear that the spirits may smell him and do him harm. It is to be noted in passing that painting the body with clay does not by any means remove the odour that does actually characterise a native after he has been eating fat meat of any kind. We must be careful, in this instance also, not to assume that an Andaman Islander means by "smell" exactly what we mean by it and nothing more. It will be shown later in the chapter that the Andamanese identify the smell of an object with its active magical principle. One example may be given here to show this. The origin of rheumatism in the legs is explained by the natives as being the result of the common practice of preparing the fibre of the *Anadendron paniculatum* by scraping it on the thigh. During this process, they say, the "smell" of the plant enters the thigh and is the cause of rheumatic or sciatic pains.

The natives give yet a third statement of their reasons for using clay. On many occasions I asked them what would happen if they ate pork or turtle and did not paint themselves. In every case I received the reply that any man who did such a thing would almost certainly be ill.

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When a number of persons give three different reasons for one and the same action, and are equally sincere throughout, it is to be presumed that the three different statements are so many different ways of saying one and the same thing. We may therefore conclude that the Andaman Islanders believe that there is a peculiar power in foods (or in some foods) which makes it dangerous to eat them. This danger may be expressed by saying that

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the person who has eaten food will, unless he takes certain precautions, be liable to be ill. Now sickness is believed to be caused by the spirits of the jungle and the sea, and therefore an alternative or equivalent statement of the same belief is that after a person has eaten food he is in danger from the spirits. We may therefore conclude that the word *ot-kinil*, when it is used to describe the condition of a person who has eaten food, denotes simply this condition of danger, and nothing more. For this we shall find ample confirmation later on. Subject to such later confirmation I will here state what has been maintained, which is (1) that the *gra-puli* patterns are to be explained as being protective, (2) that the eating of food is regarded as dangerous, and (3) that this danger is associated in the minds of the natives with sickness and with the spirits. It will be convenient to leave the first of these three propositions for later discussion and take up the second, seeking to find the meaning of this belief in the dangerous properties of food.

Not all foods are equally dangerous. I was able to establish roughly a sort of scale. The most dangerous foods are dugong; the fish called *komar*; some of the snakes; the internal fat such as the kidney-fat or the intestinal fat of pig, turtle, monitor lizard and *Paradoxurus*; the liver of sharks, sting-rays and *Plotosus*; and honey. Next in order come the flesh of pigs, turtle, monitor lizard and *Paradoxurus* and of the fishes mentioned above; also the eggs of turtle. To these should perhaps be added the edible grubs and some vegetable foods such as the yams and the *Artocarpus* fruit and seed. Lowest in the scale, that is, least dangerous, are molluscs and the commoner sorts of fish and vegetable foods.

The principles underlying this grading of foods are two. Those foods that are difficult or dangerous to procure are considered more dangerous than others. Thus all the fishes that are thought most dangerous to eat are actually dangerous, such as the sharks, the sting-rays, the armed *Plotosus*, and the fish *komar* that has a powerful spike on its head with which it can inflict a dangerous wound. Secondly the foods that are most prized are regarded as being more dangerous than those that are less prized. The internal fat of animals is regarded as a great delicacy and therefore occupies a high place in the scale. It is this also that explains

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262 the position of honey and of the edible grubs. The dugong, which is of all foods the most difficult and dangerous to procure, and is at the same time more highly prized than any other, is regarded as more dangerous to eat than any other.

It is this difference in the danger attributed to different foods that gives the clue to the explanation of the beliefs relating to them. The hypothesis I wish to put forward is that the custom of painting the body after eating food is an expression of the social value of food.

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262 In a simple community such as that of the Andaman Islands, in which the necessary food has to be provided from day to day, food occupies a predominant position, and is the chief source of those variations or oscillations between conditions of euphoria and dysphoria that constitute the emotional life of the society. Food is obtainable only by the expenditure of effort, and the effort is a communal one. The obtaining of food is the principal social activity and it is an activity in which every able-bodied member of the community is required by custom to join. A man's first duty to the society may be defined as the duty of providing food for himself and others, and no one is looked on with more contempt than one who is lazy or careless in this respect. On the contrary the man who stands highest in the esteem of others is the skilful hunter who is generous in distributing to others the food he obtains. The food provides the community with its chief joys and sorrows. When food is scarce the whole community suffers. The men spend all their time in hunting but are disappointed. They have to fall back upon foods that are little relished, such as the commoner kinds of molluscs. On the contrary when there is plenty of food the whole society rejoices together. Every one has as much as he or she can eat. Hunting and fishing become pleasant sports instead of arduous labour.

Viewing the matter from its relation to the feelings of the individual we may say that it is particularly in connection with food that he is made to feel that he is a member of the community, sharing with others their joys and sorrows, taking part in a common activity, often dependent upon others for the satisfaction of his hunger, and obliged by custom to share with those others what he himself obtains. Thus food is, for the Andaman Islander,

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775 attachment to him, and producing a condition of dysphoria, of diminished social activity. The natural impulse of the Andaman Islander or of any other human being, would be, I believe, not to shun the dead body of a loved one, but to remain near it as long as possible. It is the society, acting under a quite different set of impulses, that compels the relatives to separate themselves from the remains of the one they loved. The death of a small child has very little influence on the general activity of the community, and the motive for severing connection with the dead that is present in the case of an adult, either does not exist or is so weak as to be overruled by the private feelings of affection, and so the child is buried in the hut of the parents, that they may continue to keep it near them. This affords a good test of the hypothesis, and gives strong support to the view that the fear of the dead man (his body and his spirit) is a collective feeling induced in the society by the fact that by death he has become the object of a dysphoric condition of the collective consciousness.

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761 If the Andamanese are asked what they fear from the spirit of a dead man they reply that they fear sickness or death, and that if the burial and mourning customs are not properly observed the relatives of the dead person will fall sick and perhaps die.

753 The basis of this notion of the spirits is that the near relatives of the deceased, being bound to him by close social ties, are influenced by everything that happens to him, and share in his good or evil fortune. So that when by sickness and resulting death he is removed from the community, they are as it were drawn after him. For this reason they are, during the period of mourning, between life and death, being still attached to the dead man. Contact with the world of the dead is therefore regarded as dangerous for the living because it is believed that they may be drawn completely into that world. Death is a process by which a person leaves the living world and enters the world of the spirits, and since no one dies willingly he is conceived as being under a compulsive force acting from the world of spirits. Now sickness is a condition that often ends in death, a first stage of the way leading to the world of spirits. Hence sickness is conceived by the Andamanese as a condition of partial contact

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with that world. This is what is meant by the statement that sickness and death come from the spirits.

The way the Andamanese think about the spirits is shown in the *Akar-Bale* legend of the origin of death¹. *Yaramurud*, having died through an accident, self-caused, becomes a spirit, but he does so only under the compulsion exercised upon him by his mother, who, now that he is dead, insists that he must go away from the world of the living and become a spirit. The spirit then comes back to see his brother and by this contact causes the brother's death. The story implies that it was not because *Yaramurud* was evilly disposed towards his brother that he killed him, but on the contrary it was his attachment to his relative that caused him to return to visit him, and death followed as a result of this contact of the living man with the spirit. Since that time deaths have continued to occur in the same way. Thus it appears that the Andamanese conceive that the spirits do not cause death and sickness through evil intention, but through their mere proximity, and, as the legend very clearly shows, the burial customs are intended to cut off the unwilling spirit from contact with the living. This explains also why during the period of mourning the relatives of a dead person are thought to be in danger of sickness, and have more to fear from the spirit than others, for since it is they who were most attached to him during life it is they who are most likely to suffer from contact with him after he is dead. It was *Yaramurud's* brother who was the first to die through the influence of the spirits.

The feelings of the living towards the spirits of the dead are therefore ambivalent, compounded of affection and fear, and this must be clearly recognized if we are to understand all the Andamanese beliefs and customs. We may compare the relation between the society of the living and the society of the dead to that between two hostile communities having occasional friendly relations. That the Andamanese themselves look upon it in some such way is shown by the belief that the ceremony by which a dead man is initiated into the world of spirits resembles the peace-making ceremony. The dead man, up to the time of his death, has been living in a state of enmity with the spirits, and before he can enter their community and share their life he

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which they can join, they sing, and thus protect themselves from the spirits that are present as the cause of the death.

This explanation implies that all conditions of diminished social activity on the part of an individual are dangerous. One example of such a condition is sickness, in which the sick person is unable to pursue his ordinary occupations. Other examples are afforded by a mother, and to a certain extent a father during the period preceding and following the birth of a child, and by a woman during the menstrual period. All these, as various customs show, are believed by the Andamanese to be conditions of danger in which it is necessary to take ritual or magical precautions. A better example for our purpose is that of an adolescent during the period covered by the initiation ceremonies, when, as we have seen, he is as it were cut off from the society, and there is abundant evidence that the Andamanese believe this to be a state of danger. Another example is the condition of a homicide during the period of his isolation. Lastly, we have seen that a mourner is cut off from the ordinary social life, and it may now be noted that the native explanation of the restrictions observed in that state is that if things were not done thus the mourner would be ill; in other words the condition of mourning is one of danger, and the ritual referring to it is the means by which the danger (from the spirit world) is avoided. This explanation does not conflict with the one previously given but on the contrary we can now see that the notion that the mourner is in a position partly withdrawn from active participation in social life necessarily involves the belief that he is in a condition of danger.

We may conclude that every condition in which the individual is withdrawn from full participation in active social life is regarded as dangerous for him, and that this is at least one of the reasons why sleep is so regarded. We have already noted that all conditions of danger tend to be thought of as due to contact with the spirits, and sleep is therefore supposed to be a state in which such contact is easier than in waking life. Now sleep is visited by dreams and it comes about that the dream-life, by reason of its contrast with waking-life, is seized upon by the Andamanese as a means by which the nature of the spirit world may be represented to the imagination.

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164 **Medicine.**—1. The diseases most common among these tribes are:—

1st, malarial fever (*did'dirya*-).

2nd, catarrh (*ngi-rub*-).

3rd, coughs (*ōdag*-).

4th, rheumatism (*mōl*-).

5th, phthisis.

6th, pneumonia.

7th, heart disease.¹

757 2. In febrile complaints the treatment adopted by those living
278 in the interior, and less frequently by the coast dwellers,² is the following:—A bed is made for the patient of the leaves of the *Trigonostemon longifolius* (*gūgma*-), and his body is rubbed with these leaves, which are sometimes first boiled, while he sniffs at some crushed pieces of the same; after a time *chū'lngā*,³ is given him to drink, and then with some of their patent ointment, *kōi'ob*,⁴ which is not used internally, as has been supposed,⁵ the upper lip is painted and also the neck, if the invalid be married. When the fever is accompanied by pains in the chest or head, a *chāvga-tā*-⁶ is tied tightly round the part affected, as this is believed to act as a charm, internal pains being always ascribed to the malign influence of evil spirits.⁷ During the course of the fever, the patient is constantly rubbed with *gūgma*- leaves by one or more friends, who insist also upon his swallowing large quantities of *chū'lnga*-; scarifying is never practised at such times. As only a small proportion of cases of this kind have a fatal result, great faith is placed in the treatment above described, and, at all events, it is certain that no injurious effects are caused by it.

757 3. The first half of the rainy season is usually the most sickly time with them, as with ourselves, in regard to fever and bowel

among the women of suckling each other's infants; in fact many parents have thus become tainted with the disease, the characteristics of which have in almost every case been most strongly marked, presenting an interesting study to the medical officers who have had charge of the patients. Great benefit was derived from the treatment and remedies (mercury and iodide of potassium) usually employed in Europe, but time alone will show how far our efforts will avail to prevent the disease from infecting the entire population, if, indeed, it do not, as in certain parts of Australia, lead to the early extermination of the race.

• [753] Because of the insidious nature, and (to them) mysterious origin, of the last three named diseases, they say that either *Ērem-chāv'gala* has shot the sufferer, or *jūru-win*- has speared him. Regarding these evil spirits further reference will be found at "Death and Burial," paragraph 25, and "Religious Beliefs and Demonology," paragraphs 12 and 14.

¹ The reason for this will be found under "Tribal Communities," paragraph 5.

² Vide Appendix B, No. 63.

³ Vide Appendix B, No. 60.

⁴ Vide Mouat, p. 306.

⁵ Vide Appendix B, No. 44.

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those in pain or distress he is pitiful, and sometimes deigns to afford relief.

VI. He is the Judge from whom each soul receives its sentence after death, and, to *some* extent, the hope of escape from the torments of *jerég-làr-mū-gu*- (regarding which anon) is said to affect their course of action in the present life.¹

9. *Pū-luga*- is believed to live in a large stone house in the sky, with a wife whom he created for himself; she is green in appearance, and has two names, *chā'nā .dū'lola* (Mother Fresh-water Shrimp), and *chā'nā .pā-lak-* (Mother Eel); by her he has a large family, all, except the eldest, being girls; these last, known as *mō-ro-win-* (sky spirits or angels), are said to be black in appearance, and, with their mother, amuse themselves from time to time by throwing fish and prawns into the streams and sea for the use of the inhabitants of the world. *Pū-luga*'s son is called *pīj-chōr-*: he is regarded as a sort of archangel, and is alone permitted to live with his father, whose orders it is his duty to make known to the *mō-ro-win-*.

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10. *Pū-luga*- is said to eat and drink, and, during the dry months of the year, to pass much of his time in sleep, as is proved by his voice (thunder) being rarely heard at that season; he is the source whence they receive all their supplies of animals, birds, and turtles; when they anger him he comes out of his house and blows, and growls, and hurls burning faggots at them—in other words, visits their offences with violent thunderstorms and heavy squalls; except for this purpose he seldom leaves home, unless it be during the rains, when he descends to earth to provide himself with certain kinds of food; how often this happens they do not know since, now-a-days, he is invisible.

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11. *Pū-luga*- never himself puts any one to death, but he objects so strongly to seeing a pig badly quartered and carved that he invariably points out those who offend him in this respect to a class of malevolent spirits called *chōl-*, one of whom forthwith despatches the unfortunate individual.

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12. *Pū-luga*- has no authority over the evil spirits, the most dreaded of which are *ē-rem-chāw-gala*, *jū-ru-win-*, and *nī-la-*; they are self-created, and have existed from time immemorial. The first of these, the evil spirit of the woods, has a numerous progeny by his wife *chā'nā .bad-gilola*, who remains at home with her daughters and younger children, while her husband and grown-up sons roam about the jungles with a lighted torch

¹ It is from regard to the fact that their beliefs on these points approximate so closely to the true faith concerning the Deity that I have adopted the English method of spelling all equivalents of "God" with an initial capital.

attached to their left legs, in order that the former may injure any unhappy wights who may meet them unprotected,¹ and in the dark; he generally makes his victims ill, or kills them by wounding them internally with invisible arrows,² and, if he is successful in causing death, it is supposed that they feast upon the raw flesh;³ *ĕrem-chàugala*, indeed, appears to be to the Andamanese much what "*Arlak*"⁴ is to the aboriginal Australian: in both cases these evil spirits are represented as afraid of light; *ĕrem-chàugala* is said to be also afraid of, or to avoid, the demon *nīla*. 776 761 753

13. This spirit, *nīla*,⁵ is supposed to live in ant-hills, and to have neither wife nor child; he is not regarded as such a malevolent personage as *ĕrem-chàugala*, and, though he is always armed with a knife, he rarely injures human beings with it, or, when he does do so, it is not in order to feed upon their bodies, for he is said to eat earth only.

14. As regards *jūru-win*, the evil spirit of the sea, they say that he too is invisible, and lives in the sea with his wife and children, who help him to devour the bodies of those who are drowned or buried at sea; fish constitute the staple of his food, but he also occasionally, by way of variety, attacks the aborigines he finds fishing on the shores or by the creeks. The weapon he uses is a spear, and persons who are seized with cramp or any sudden illness, on returning from, or while on the water, are said to have been "speared" by *jūru-win*. He has various submarine residences, and boats for travelling under the surface of the sea, while he carries with him a net, in which he places all the victims, human or piscine, he may succeed in capturing. 776 753

15. Besides these three chief demons, there is a company of evil spirits who are called *chól*-, and who are much dreaded. They are believed to be descendants of *mai'a chól*-,⁶ who lived in antediluvian times. They generally punish those who offend them by baking or roasting pig's flesh, the smell of which is particularly obnoxious to them, as it is also to *Pāluga*-, who, therefore, often assists them in discovering the delinquent; the same risk does not attend boiling pork,⁷ which the olfactory nerves of the fastidious *chól*- are not keen enough to detect. 776

¹ Vide ante "Superstitions," paragraph 1.

² Vide ante "Medicine," paragraph 1. (foot-note), and "Death and Burial," paragraph 24.

³ Vide ante "Death and Burial," paragraph 26.

⁴ Vide Wood, "Natural History of Man," p. 92.

⁵ Cases have been cited of persons who have been found stabbed, whose deaths are attributed to *Nīla*: the possibility of the individuals in question having been murdered is scouted.

⁶ Vide post "Mythology," paragraph 33.

⁷ Vide post "Food," paragraph 27.

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 16. While the Andamanese say that they are liable to be struck by *ērem-chāu-gala* or *jū-ru-win-* at any time or in any place, the *chōt-* strike those only who offend them, and that during the day while they are stationary, this being necessitated by the distance from the earth of their abode, whence they hurl their darts: an invisible spear is the weapon they always use, and this is thrown with unerring aim at the head of their victim, and is invariably fatal. As these demons are considered especially dangerous on the hottest days, they are apparently held accountable for the deaths from sunstroke which happen from time to time.

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 17. The sun, *chān'a bō-do-*, is the wife of the moon, *mai'a ō-gar-*, and the stars, *chā-to-*, which are of both sexes, are their children: the latter go to sleep during the day; the whole family have their meals near *Pāluga's* house, but never enter it; *chān'a bō-do-* is like fire and covered with thorns, but *mai'a ō-gar-* is white skinned, and has two long tusks¹ and a big beard; their home is situated somewhere below the eastern horizon, and while the former, after setting, rests till dawn, the latter, probably in consequence of the cares of his numerous family, is obliged to keep very irregular hours. During their passage under the earth to their home, they are believed to afford the blessing of light to the unfortunate spirits in Hades, and also, while sleeping, to shed a "dim religious light" over that region: it is by *Pāluga's* command that the celestial bodies, while crossing the sky, bestow their light.

18. The phenomena of the waning and waxing of the moon is explained by saying that they are occasioned by "his" applying a coating of cloud to his person by degrees, after the manner of their own use of *kōi-ob-* and *tā-la-ōg-*,² and then gradually wiping it off.³

19. Reference has already been made to their superstition regarding the cause of a lunar eclipse, but in case *mai'a ō-gar-* should be so ill-advised as permanently to withhold his light or render himself in other ways still more disagreeable, whenever the moon is eclipsed some persons at once seize their bows and twang them as rapidly as possible, thereby producing a rattling sound as if discharging a large number of arrows, while others commence at once sharpening their *rā-tā-*.⁴ Of course this hostile demonstration is never lost upon the moon, who does not venture to hurt those who show themselves ready

¹ The horns of the crescent moon.

² Vide Appendix B, items 58 and 60.

³ "The Eskimo say that the sun, which they regard as feminine, smears the face of her brother, the moon, with soot, when he presses his love upon her" (vide Peschel, p. 256).

⁴ Vide Appendix B, item 2.

841 resembling these practices in any other part of the world. Never hitherto
171 described, they should be carefully considered. This would require a lengthy
description, for which there is no space here. We may recall that menstruating
Onge women are allowed to circulate freely at all times. An interesting detail
[751] is that the *naquinēghē* of first menstruations are worn by relations around their
neck as having health-giving properties. The women, as we know, use special
841 soft, long leaves, collected for them by their husbands, as absorbents. They
[824] are the leaves of *Myristica longifolia* or of *Tretanthera lanceifolia* both species
serving the purpose. They are applied under the *naquinēghē* and drawn back
between the legs to be secured above the buttocks. - Sexual intercourse is
[834] forbidden during the menstrual period even by the Onge: illness - a swelling
[753] of the arms or legs - would follow. A curious theory about the reason for
menstruation in very young girls is that it is a result of previous sexual contacts
stimulated by nose rubbing - the Onge substitute for kissing. They ignore the
892 unhygienic practice of kissing with the lips, and never even kiss their children.
Only nose rubbing is practiced. The anatomical structure of the Onge nose,
which almost totally lacks nasal bones and is very fleshy, may explain this
transference of sensation from nearby regions, i. e. the lips.

844 Births take place in the forest and are surrounded by no hygienic pre-
cautions or disinfection as conceived by us. Clay is applied to stem puerperal
bleeding, without provoking infection. The only assistant is the pregnant
woman's husband, and sometimes one or two old women. Their ability equals
that of a herdsman delivering his goat of a kid. No inconvenience arises, in
either instance, from lack of precautions. - The tiny, tender and graceful bodies
[751] of Onge infants are smeared with ochre and light-coloured clay for hygienic
purposes. This is done immediately after birth, and affords some protection
against the teeming legions of mosquitos and ticks that plague Little Andaman.
The infant is never washed in water, not even at the very moment of birth.
The placenta is buried 30 or 40 cms deep, under the bed of naked branches
upon which the mother delivered her baby.

842 An argument that deserves much attention concerns the possible link
143 between lack of hygiene and sterility among the Onge. A vast number of married
couples have no offspring, thereby threatening their group with extinction.
Consanguinity could be given as a cause: let us examine it. No doubt the Onge
are related to each other as a consequence of long interbreeding in their island
with no foreigners admitted. These conditions afford an ideal field for studying
the effects of endogamy on man. Nowhere in the world, as far as I know, are a
people so isolated as in Little Andaman. Inbreeding has existed at 100 % ever
since remote times. In other words, the Onge would seem to be the most highly
inbred human population known up to the present. Could this fact alone, aside
from unhealthy habits, explain their present widespread sterility? Special
174 studies on the subject should be undertaken, keeping in mind that the Onge
have certainly inhabited Little Andaman for thousands of years, on the evi-
dence of my excavations in their kitchen-middens.

no specialized physicians, the Onge do not understand that payment can be exacted for medical care. This stems from the fact that wages are not considered by those happy people as payment for any kind of work whatsoever, but only as a gift. I realized this when I tried to pay my guides after our extenuating marches through the jungle: in order to avoid offending the natives that we had casually met in the course of our trip, I had to give equal reward to everybody. 757
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The Onge consider some men or women better endowed than others with anti-malefic influence; but these too neither demand nor receive wages for their services. Evil spirits or evil persons are believed to be principally responsible for illness. A series of superstitions and remarkable habits derive from this belief. The above-mentioned precautions concerning the *naquinéghé* are among them. For identical reasons they carefully hide hair cuttings, but not nail parings, for the simple reason that nails are never cut but worn down by digging for edible roots, fishing, and other rough work. Superstition, as we know, is also the reason for painting the body to prevent fever and other ills. 753
[756]

In the depths of their jungle the Onge appear to practice some kind of witchcraft. On several occasions I noticed the mysterious behaviour of some natives travelling with me. Occasionally a man left our marching column to examine the inside of a huge hollow tree and signal to his friends. They did not prevent me from looking into the hollow, where I saw only a simple structure of short sticks resembling a trap without being one. The Onge do not use traps; moreover, those structures were far too flimsy to catch anything. Often, two or three men assembled in consultation, rearranged the sticks that had probably been dislodged by the passage of lizards, crabs or other small animals, and walked away silently. I could get no explanation on the matter. Certainly the Onge are sagacious observers of animal and vegetable life and have deep knowledge of their hidden properties. Some trees are probably used for magical purposes, but, I insist, it is impossible as yet to affirm it. The structures in question consisted of four vertical sticks, about 30 cms long, joined at the top by four more sticks of approximately the same length, placed horizontally. The result was a box-like frame, loose and unsecured. The slightest disturbance, such as a light breeze, could destroy the flimsy construction. As far as I could guess they invested those structures with curative properties, but in what manner remains a mystery. I noticed analogous practices among Central African Pygmies and other primitives. 789
[224]

It is very clear that the Onge dread illness and magic spells, for they consider themselves at a loss in fighting such evils. Unhygienic habits are of no importance to them. 754
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Resting is considered favorable to good health. The Onge indulge voluptuously in rest, interrupting it, however, with too frequent sexual excursions. They mainly rest from doing nothing, because 90% of their time is spent in what, for them, is the most agreeable manner of enjoying life. 517
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In mid-March, when the honey harvest reaches its peak, the Onge guzzle 262

Onges

THE ANDAMAN ISLANDERS

157 Western standards taciturn or sly, and the Negro peoples, who
 522 frequently manifest complete abandonment in their amusement.
 157 Obscenities appear to be an unfailing source of amusement to the
 522 Onges, who indulge in them at every opportunity, even with
 831 strangers, and the obscene dances of the womenfolk are a continual
 source of pleasure. The exchange of obscenities is, indeed, a sign
 of friendship, and I found that vulgarity was invariably immensely
 successful in provoking hilarity; any subsequent negotiations were
 always peaceable and satisfactory.

302 An extension of this vulgarity is an infantile vanity, not without
 157 sexual significance. The care with which their bodies are painted
 nearly every day is one aspect of this vanity; the more a wife loves
 her husband the more magnificent the designs she executes on him.
 153 The paintings on their bodies reach a peak every two or three days,
 151 as the Onges fear illness and death if they are not newly daubed, and
 161 the face at least must be continually painted, with at least smears on
 the chest, arms and legs. A man returning from an exceptionally
 successful hunting trip is met by his wife with a specially unusual
 and elaborate design, which she carries out with great devotion.

[123] During each of my visits to the island the Onges would rush up to
 show me their embellishments as soon as they were finished, and
 took a delight in standing in front of my camera, even though they
 had no idea what it was for.

304 It is curious that unlike most primitive peoples, the Onges do
 171 not practise tattooing, which is one of the simplest ways, if not *the*
 simplest, in which such peoples satisfy their craving for physical
 184 admiration. The other Andamanese do, puncturing the skin with
 302 tiny slivers of obsidian or quartz, but the Onges paint with ochre
 384 instead. They love, too, to weave garlands of fruit, flowers and
 leaves from the forest, returning to the camp laden with them, men
 184 and women alike, delighted with their own beauty. This divergence
 of customs in peoples essentially of the same stock, but separated for
 long periods of time into endogamous isolates, is very remarkable.

838 An intense preoccupation with sexual attraction and activity has
 led to the prevalence of aberration. All the Onges have homosexual
 tendencies. I became aware of this during my first visit to Little
 Andaman on one of my longer expeditions, when I had taken only
 men with me, and on subsequent occasions I therefore allowed the
 men to bring their wives. The effect of long periods of absence on